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AUTHOR Severance, Jake
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ABSTRACT

In planning for an arts facility for a private school, it is necessary to consider the proposal's appropriateness to the student body, curriculum, and community. The early appointment of a director prevents expensive mistakes and gives the program an articulate spokesperson. In addition, the teaching and support staff must be chosen with care. An architect should be selected who is imaginative and considers the needs of the people using the facility. In general, spaces should be kept open and flexible and there should be more space planned for than is needed at the outset. The facility should include teaching areas, studios, a gallery, and performance areas. Enthusiastic financial support from alumni, parents, and friends will facilitate applying for aid from other sources, such as an arts commission or private foundations. Significant community involvement may also make it possible to apply for state or federal aid. Searching lists of foundations can help locate appropriate organizations without wasted effort. Careful researching of particular foundations' characteristics and expectations will help in writing an effective proposal. (Author/WD)

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NOTES ON PLANNING & FUNDING FOR SCHOOL ARTS FACILITIES

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by: Jake Severance
Paul Mellon Arts Center
Choate Rosemary Hall
Wallingford, Ct. 06492

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I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The main concern should be one of appropriateness. How comprehensive should your new program be? A modest program might be easily realized with the addition of a course or two and the renovation of existing space. A more ambitious proposal encompassing Fine Arts, Music, Dance, Drama and Film will have a substantial impact on every constituency connected with your school. Each of these should be contemplated in the light of the size and traditions of the school.

Student Body:

Does your school traditionally enroll a significant proportion of arts minded students? If the answer is "no" you will be developing a brand new challenge for your admissions office. An ambitious arts endeavor has to be more than a simple enrichment program and will require the support of at least a few students who could go on to a career in the arts if they so desire. Enrichment experience is important of course, but it will benefit tremendously from the leadership supplied by students with a strong affinity for the arts.

Sports Program:

Should students sometimes be forced to choose between a highly competitive team sport and a lead role in a major dramatic production? If your school requires students to play some sort of afternoon sport every term, a time bind can be anticipated. It may become necessary to negotiate for the waiver of some athletic requirements.

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Academic Curriculum:

Should your new curriculum compete in the academic market place with sciences, languages, etc? Any ambitious arts program will include courses for academic credit. Some re-thinking must be given to graduation requirements or recommendations. Additional serious thought must be devoted to methods of counseling students about their course selections.

Faculty:

Will your whole faculty be comfortable with a major shift in attitudes toward art? In a new program the arts will probably move out of the extra-curricular status. Some teachers in other disciplines (and coaches of major sports) may not always be immediately understanding of new arts endeavors. Some tension is almost inevitable. Very likely you will discover a need to establish a "new diplomacy" in campus politics.

Parents & Alumni:

Possibly some of the initial drive for major improvement in the Arts Curriculum will have come from individuals in these groups. Nevertheless, as groups outside your immediate school community, many of these people may be more inclined to preserve school traditions. Since at least some of your support, financial and otherwise, must come from these areas it would be wise to become more familiar with the attitudes and desires of these groups. Very likely your development office can be a great help in this effort.

Civic Involvement:

Would your town be amenable to joint efforts? If your school is in a relatively populous area, it is well worth contemplating inviting cooperation from your own and surrounding communities. This could be a rewarding town-gown endeavor particularly if you wish to include outside professional groups in your theater and music performance schedules. Not only will your audiences enrich the effort through their diversity and increased size but your program can make an intelligent cultural contribution to local civic pride.

Summary:

Every school will, of course, decide for itself what dimensions it needs for the arts.

Some decision making guidelines:

1. Does your clientele need the added dimension?
2. Can you peacefully persuade the aforementioned constituencies to accommodate a major new program?
3. Can the size of your school community tolerate the scope of your proposal?

If the answer to these three questions is "yes" it is time to examine the issue of personnel.

II. PERSONNEL

Director/Coordinator:

Once you have made the commitment to a comprehensive arts program, it is essential to select a director or coordinator as soon as possible. This need not be a boss with a capital "B", but it must be some one whose primary function on campus will be arts management. Even if you already have an arts

committee, your program will lack coherence unless there is a single desk to serve as a clearing house for proposals and decisions.

The individual chosen need not be an artiste. Furthermore, the likelihood of finding a person with equal appreciation of Fine Arts, Music, Dance, Theatre and Film is worse than remote. It would be more realistic to seek some one with a strong flair for imaginative organization. If you must go outside the school, Indiana University and Syracuse both have Masters programs in arts management. Undoubtedly, there are others. Harvard Business School sometimes has a summer seminar in arts management should you wish additional training for local talent.

The early appointment of a competent director, even before your program is fully developed, before your facility is a sketch on the back of an envelope, will prevent expensive mistakes and give your program an articulate spokesman.

Teaching Staff:

Many people in arts education thrive on the teaching experience alone but a serious program needs some practicing artists as well. These artist/teachers need time for their own work and cannot be asked to do extra duties outside the arts area.

Support Staff:

An ambitious arts program cannot run all by itself. It will need secretarial and managerial assistance for such jobs as scheduling instrumental lessons, running box office, correspondence for funding, scheduling events for each year's program, handling contracts for outside performers, publicity. As in a library, there is a plethora of "invisible work" which must carry on behind the walls of an arts facility.

III. THE FABRIC

Architects:

Many architects like to put form before function. This can seriously hamper an ambitious and versatile arts program. At the risk of seizing upon the obvious and beating it to death, I must remark that space should exist for the people using it.

Select an imaginative but hungry architect. It may be more difficult to negotiate with a well known personality. Make sure your architect does thorough homework. Make sure you do yours, too. If you have a good arts director/coordinator at the outset, the homework will be done as a matter of course and the communications with the architect will be lucid.

Spaces:

Plan for more space than you think you will need. You will need more sooner than you think. No matter how meticulously you plan, there will be unforeseeable development and re-development in a lively program. Do not be over-sold on sophisticated technology but do your basic stuff thoroughly. (e.g. Adequate soundproofing for music practice spaces; sprung floor for dance studio.) In general, keep spaces open and flexible:

Teaching areas: Music and especially drama will need more classroom space than you might at first imagine. Be sure to plan for plenty of audio-visual space; a place to show films and slides as well as a film workshop. AV is still an expanding field.

Studios: These should be vast open areas with moveable dividers and no direct sunlight. Voluminous storage facilities and handy water supplies are also essential.

Gallery: You will need ample display space for student work and visiting artists. Depending on your special needs, this can often be a public space other than the arts area itself (e.g. Dining Hall, Library, etc.) Once again, the watchword is flexibility; ample wall space with suitable covering to withstand numerous hangings and easy repairs, moveable dividers, plenty of light.

Performance areas: A main theater with sufficient seating plus suitable sound and lighting facilities might already exist on your campus. Whether you have this or are planning a new or improved theater you can be sure that increased interest in the arts will cause additional demands on your theater. Everyone will want to be on stage and you can ease the the scheduling problems if you make other provisions for experimental theater, dance, and audio-visual presentations. Multi-purpose space is, of course, economical but the more of it you create, the more scheduling hassle you will have.

By this time funding will have become a major concern. It will be easier to cope with this central issue if serious thought has already been devoted to the specifics mentioned thus far.

IV. FUNDING

Communities:

Your own school development community of alumni, parents and friends is the best place to start looking for support. The more enthusiasm you can generate in this area, the better your chances when you come to apply to other sources such as Arts Commissions or private foundations.

If you have been able to develop a liason with your town community and can plan on a diverse and lively performance program, you might be able to sell season memberships to townspeople, offering them tickets at reduced rates. This, too, will work in your favor when you seek other sources of funding.

State and Federal aid:

Most state offices of the National Endowment for the Arts seem reluctant to award funds to private schools even if proposals include the public. The greater your community involvement the better your chances. It can be done but it is difficult and the rewards are usually limited. Furthermore, the Commissions themselves seem to have less and less money to dispense these days. In general, a bleak scene.

Private Foundations:

The best source of information is:

The Foundation Center
888 Seventh Avenue
New York, New York 10019

also:
The Taft Foundation Directory
1000 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

These organizations are in business to list and categorize foundations so that institutions seeking funding can make intelligent searches for the appropriate foundations with a minimum of wasted effort. Development experts seem to favor The Foundation Center in New York City. The outfit is remarkably thorough.

Search Procedure:

1. Define your proposal.
2. Make a general list of possible sources gleaned from the Foundation Directory published by the Foundation Center.
3. Check in Comsearch Printout pamphlets (also available in microfiche) for foundations in appropriate categories. Foundation Center has over a hundred. You would need #17 Independent Primary & Secondary Education plus #46, #47, & #48 each dealing with arts areas. These listings will show you the types of grants awarded in the past.
4. Check your choices in The Foundation Center's Source Book Profiles for more detailed information on the size and intentions of foundations on which you have focused.
5. Rewrite your proposal in very concise terms stating specifically and positively not what you hope to do but what you will do.
6. Rewrite the proposal again.

You are now ready to approach the foundations. They all insist on their impartiality. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated many times that it does not hurt to have personal contacts. Does one of your trustees know a trustee of a foundation you wish to approach?

I have more detailed information on the foundation search and the proposal writing game. You would probably get even more detailed information and assistance from your own development people. Probably their first advice would be to make sure you raise all your funds before starting construction and to get enough money to endow the facility after it is completed.